

FACT SHEET



Mason City Coal Gasification Site Mason City, Iowa

July 2000

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

EPA will hold a public meeting on Monday, July 31, 2000, at 6:30 p.m. in the Mason City Room, Mason City Public Library, 225 2nd Street SE, Mason City, Iowa. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information on the proposed plan.

EPA is asking for comments on the proposed plan. Comments can be made orally or in writing at the public meeting or can be mailed to the address listed below. The 30-day comment period opens July 24, 2000, and closes August 22, 2000.

Written comments (post-marked no later than August 22, 2000), can be sent to:

Diane Huffman
Environmental Protection Agency
Office of External Programs
901 N. 5th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Comments can also be faxed to 913-551-7066 or e-mailed to huffman.diane@epa.gov.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is releasing a proposed plan identifying a preferred alternative to address ground water contamination at the Mason City Coal Gasification Superfund site, Mason City, Iowa. The site, located near the center of Mason City, is bounded on the east by South Pennsylvania Avenue, on the south by 5th Street SE, on the west by South Delaware Avenue, and on the north by Willow Creek.

EPA will make a decision on how to address the contaminated ground water after reviewing comments received during the public comment period. The decision will be published in a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD will also include a summary of EPA's responses to the comments received during the public comment period.

SITE BACKGROUND

In the early 1900s before natural gas was available, a manufactured gas plant operated at the site generating "town gas" for lighting and heating. Residues from the gas manufacturing process, commonly referred to as coal tar, were left on site which resulted in soil and

ground water contamination. In 1984, while excavating for a new sewer line, the city discovered coal tar in the soil. Some compounds found in coal tar, such as polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), are hazardous substances that can cause health and environmental problems if handled improperly. Benzene, ethylbenzene, toluene, and xylene are other compounds commonly found at

manufactured gas plants.

Interstate Power Company, now Alliant Energy Corporation, conducted investigations to determine the extent of soil and ground water contamination and determined appropriate remedies to clean up the contamination. In 1994, the site was placed on EPA's National Priorities List (NPL), a list of sites eligible for cleanup under the Superfund program.

To accelerate the cleanup, contaminated soil at the site was excavated and thermally treated to remove the contaminants. The treated soil was placed back into the excavated areas at the site. When this action was completed in 1996, more than 21,000 tons of contaminated materials had been thermally treated. This action eliminated the ongoing source of the ground water contamination.

PREFERRED REMEDY

Although the source of the ground water contamination has been removed, contaminated ground water remains at the site. EPA identified and evaluated six remedies that could be used to address the contaminated ground water. Of the six, monitored natural attenuation of ground water with institutional controls is EPA's preferred remedy. This remedy meets the requirements of overall protection of human health and the environment.

EPA is recommending institutional controls for the site that consist of the following:

- ! Placement of restrictions on the site, including no residential development, no basements in any buildings constructed on the site, and no water supply wells for municipal, industrial, or domestic purposes.
- ! Placement of an environmental easement to provide EPA access to the site.
- ! Listing the site on the State Abandoned or Uncontrolled Site Registry so that it cannot be sold or transferred without the approval of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Natural attenuation refers to naturally occurring processes in the environment that result in a decrease in the concentration of contaminants over time. It appears that subsurface conditions are favorable for natural attenuation to occur at the Mason City Coal Gasification site. Ground water will be monitored periodically to ensure the concentration of contaminants is reduced below health-based levels.

In the event the monitoring data indicate natural attenuation processes are no longer effective in cleaning up the ground water contamination, another system will be implemented. That system would pump ground water out of the ground, treat it in a treatment plant constructed onsite, and discharge the treated water to the onsite sanitary sewer.

PARTIES INVOLVED

Much of the work at the site was conducted through an agreement with EPA known as an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC). Interstate Power Company, the owner of the property since 1957, entered into an AOC with EPA in 1986 to conduct an investigation of the contamination at the site. In 1991, they entered into another AOC to conduct additional investigations of the site and examine different cleanup alternatives for the site. In 1995, Interstate Power Company, Kansas City Power & Light Company, the city of Mason City, and Bob McKiness Grading & Excavating, Inc., entered into an AOC with EPA to remove the source of the contamination.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

EPA encourages community members to review and comment on the proposed plan for the Mason City Coal Gasification site. A file containing site-related documents, called the Administrative Record File, is available for public review at the following information repositories, during normal business hours:

Mason City Public Library
225 2nd Street SE
Mason City, Iowa

U.S. EPA Region 7
901 N. 5th Street
Kansas City, Kansas

If you have questions or need additional information about this site, please contact:

Diane Huffman, Community Involvement Coordinator
Office of External Programs
EPA Region 7
901 N. 5th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101
1-913-551-7003, Toll-free 1-800-223-0425
Fax: 1-913-551-7066
E-mail: huffman.diane@epamail.epa.gov